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# BUDGET

New Century. **Bold Plans.**

# 2000

## THIRD QUARTER ACTIVITY REPORT

2000-2001

FOR RELEASE FEBRUARY 5, 2001

**Alberta**  
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

# Where the money goes

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Four times a year the Government of Alberta produces fiscal updates on how much it is earning, spending and investing on behalf of Albertans. It's one way the provincial government fulfills its promise to be accountable to Albertans. But there's more to accountability than numbers, economic indicators and financial tables.

Quarterly Activity Reports give Albertans details on where the money goes. Each report lists the most important and interesting initiatives begun or accomplished by this government during the quarter. This report covers the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2000-01; the months of October, November and December 2000.

The employees of the Alberta Government are responsible for getting many of these initiatives off the ground and maintaining them with a standard of excellence second to none. You'll notice there are an amazing number of accomplishments, but it's the quality and the variety that makes this government most proud.

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# Listening to Albertans

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The Alberta Government listens to Albertans when they talk about their priorities, and it has a proven track record of acting on those priorities.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of the 2000-01 fiscal year, this government heard from hundreds of thousands of Albertans and took action, when needed, to ensure Albertans' priorities are also the priorities of the provincial government. A sampling of government actions follows...

**conducted a province-wide survey - *It's Your Money***  
- asking Albertans how best to use interest savings and unpredictable resource revenue once the province's accumulated debt is gone. Over 120,000 Albertans responded to the survey.

**received more than 80,000 calls, 1,100 email comments and 2,700 email questions** through *Alberta Connects* (a toll-free province-wide service through 310-4455) and responded to all calls and questions.

**consulted** with stakeholder groups **regarding the electricity industry restructuring** and conducted the third annual client satisfaction survey of the electricity industry.

**appointed committee to finalize provincial recommendations** on outstanding issues in Alberta's livestock industry including municipal and provincial roles, approval processes and ongoing monitoring and support.

**continued discussions on fisheries, wildlife management and renewable resources** with Aboriginal stakeholders including *Dene Thá First Nation, Little Red River Cree/TallCree, Whitefish Lake First Nation* and *Western Cree Tribal Council*.

**held a public meeting** with members of the Calling Lake community to address, in particular, the protection of walleye populations.

**held formal public consultation** to inform the public about the *NES Strategy* (Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy) and gather feedback.



worked with professional associations to **develop new legislation** (such as the *Regulated Accounting Profession Act*) and amend and/or add new regulations to existing legislation including the *Veterinary Profession Act*, the *Regulated Forestry Profession Act* and the *Agrologists Act*.

sponsored *Smart2000*, a four-day conference in Calgary, that **brought science and technology leaders together to discuss “smart” practices** for prosperity, learning, professions and communities.

launched an **MLA committee to review policing** in Alberta, including the governance, responsibility and role of policing as well as the *Police Act*. MLAs will consult with police, police commissions, First Nations, municipalities and the public.

**injected an additional \$2 million** (for a total of \$18.1 million this year) into marketing Alberta as a tourist destination; and **realigned *Tourism Destination Region* boundaries** in response to recommendations from industry stakeholders.

**launched** the second stage of *Ag Summit 2000* with the establishment of *Agrivantage*, an **industry/government implementation group** that will work with 14 action teams to address initiatives arising from the agriculture public consultation held over the first six months of 2000.

**consulted** with the gaming industry, municipalities, First Nations and charitable organizations in a **review of licensing policies** for assessing new casinos, casino expansions and relocations; for new games and gaming environments; for VLTs; and First Nations' gaming.

conducted seven forums across the province to encourage and enable youth to discuss their issues and develop local solutions. Over 1,000 young people took part.

responded to over 30,000 calls concerning provincial programs and services for seniors through the *Alberta Seniors Information Line* (1-800-642-3853).

provided advice and information on Alberta Registries and consumer issues to more than 62,000 Albertans through the Government Services toll-free call centre, bringing the annual total to over 200,000.

completed second round of public consultations on public safety and sour gas and released its final report.

# Promoting

## Health and Wellness

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In 2000, almost 90 per cent of Albertans rated their own health as good, very good or excellent, and they've always rated health care as one of their top priorities. So, the Alberta Government is constantly looking for ways to improve the health system. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter was no exception. The health system was improved and strengthened because this government...



**worked** with health authorities in and around Edmonton to **implement Phase III of the Meningitis Immunization Program** targeted to children and adults aged 2 to 24 years. About 60 to 70% of post secondary students aged 20 to 24 were immunized.

**approved 16 oral surgery contracts** under the *Health Care Protection Act* after a thorough review to ensure all contracts comply with the principles of the *Canada Health Act*, provide a public benefit, and support Alberta's publicly funded health system.

**announced \$26.5 million in wage increases for community workers** who provide programs and services to people with special needs. This is part of a two-year, \$40.8 million wage package for community agencies.

**updated the *Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan*** to provide more flexibility and longer health coverage options for Albertans who travel extensively or residents who are temporarily absent from Alberta.

**hosted the *Advancing Primary Health Care in Alberta Showcase Conference*** for Alberta health authorities and service providers to examine the results of 27 primary health care pilot projects.

**provided \$40 million to increase wages and retain service providers working with persons with developmental disabilities** and other Albertans needing community-based services.

**celebrated the first anniversary of a three-year alternative payment plan pilot project** in Calgary (one of four such projects). Physicians at Crowfoot Village Family Practice are paid a fixed rate based on the number of patients rather than on the number and type of services.

added two new Type 2 Diabetes drugs to the approved *Drug Benefits List*. The drugs Actos and Avandia are the first of a new class of medications that help control high blood sugar levels by reducing insulin resistance and enabling the body to respond to the insulin it produces. Diabetes affects about 90,000 Albertans.

established a \$10 million *Continuing Education Endowment Fund* to support professional development and lifelong learning for registered nurses. Continuing education is key to recruiting and retaining health care professionals in Alberta.

conducted a province-wide consultation in 10 communities and organized an *Aquired Brain Injury Forum* involving 135 stakeholders to develop recommendations for an Alberta brain injury action plan.

partnered with the Alberta Construction Safety Association to produce the *Construction Safety Training System* that is now offered to unemployed youth through provincial Youth Connections Offices.

facilitated a *Nursing Resource Planning Group* session for key health care sector stakeholders, whose mandate is to provide a unified voice for shaping Alberta's nursing future.

allocated \$1 million for 2000-01 to ensure young offenders with mental health needs receive timely assessment and appropriate treatment.

celebrated 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Alberta Rat Patrol* program which has saved an estimated \$1 billion in property damage, livestock losses, wasted food and health care costs.

assessed water treatment systems at *Lesser Slave Lake Provincial Park*, *Hilliard's Bay Provincial Park* and *Historic Dunvegan Provincial Park* for water quality.

released a study to Cold Lake area residents indicating **groundwater arsenic levels** in the area are naturally occurring and were not high enough to pose serious health risks.

allocated \$25.8 million for a **continuing care project in Camrose**, which will include the construction of facilities at four sites in Camrose.

# Supporting Children and Families

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Alberta is a great place to raise a family because the Alberta Government understands how important it is to support and protect children and other family members. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, government reported a marked decrease in family violence since the *Protection Against Family Violence Act* was introduced in 1999. We see further progress where the Court of Queen's Bench upheld the province's new legislation to protect children involved in prostitution. A Queen's Bench Justice overturned a provincial court decision that found the law violated children's rights. The Justice said that, for their protection, children can continue to be apprehended and confined under this legislation. To further support children and families this government also...

**allocated \$48 million over three years for five initiatives to help children at risk** involving: the *Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution* program, the *Alberta Partnership on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome*, programs for very young children, community response teams and supports for youth leaving child welfare.

**hosted *Safe and Caring Schools and Communities*, a national conference on strategies** for violence prevention, bullying, discipline and responsible behaviors.

**completed a review of the delivery of education programs for students with special needs**, which highlighted ways to restructure funding and enhance accountability for special needs program delivery.

**initiated a program in Edson for high school students to learn about career opportunities** with Alberta Environment.

**increased capacity to find people who have defaulted on maintenance payments** through a new website ([www.gov.ab.ca/just/mep/findlist.htm#top](http://www.gov.ab.ca/just/mep/findlist.htm#top)). Publishing debtors' names and photos online has already resulted in numerous tips on several individuals.

**honoured Alberta's 3,377 foster families** for helping children in need during Foster Family Week in October.

**declared November as the 14<sup>th</sup> annual *Family Violence Prevention Month*** to raise public awareness about family violence issues.

**released self-help booklets for people who want to represent themselves in family law**, covering 27 court applications ranging from child support, custody and access, to restraining and protection orders.



# Supporting Education and Lifelong Learning

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It is essential to get a good formal education, but people don't stop learning when they graduate from high school or university. So, the Alberta Government supports learning wherever it happens. And the results of this kind of thinking are very good.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, for example, the *1999 Third International Mathematics and Science Study* showed that Alberta's Grade 8 students are among the best in the world and over 90 per cent of visitors surveyed rated the knowledge they gained at provincial heritage facilities as good or excellent. To continue this trend in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, this government...

**created** classroom and teacher **resources for provincial schools** that emphasize aspects of *the 8<sup>th</sup> IAAF World Championships in Athletics* (to be held August 2001 in Edmonton).

**provided Web Workshops for educators** focusing on awareness training and practical advice for safe and effective Internet use.

**held** (in association with the *Alberta Online Consortium*) the fourth annual *Online Learning Symposium* showcasing Alberta's leadership in e-learning and online schools.

**awarded** more than \$14 million through *Alexander Rutherford and Louise McKinney scholarships* to **7,400 Alberta students** for outstanding academic achievement at high school and post-secondary levels.

**announced** a \$6 million grant to the *Southern Alberta Institute of Technology* (SAIT) for 2001-02 **to increase space** so that almost twice as many learners can attend the institute by 2005.

**added** the newly developed *Information and Communication Technology* (ICT) **program** to the provincial curriculum so students can learn to best use technology appropriately and add value to their work by blending technology lessons in core subjects from kindergarten to Grade 12.

**conducted** the final phase of an **extensive public consultation** that will ensure Alberta's apprenticeship and industry training system is more responsive to employers, employees and apprentices.

**provided** an additional \$35 million to offset higher than anticipated energy costs for school boards and post-secondary institutions.

hosted the *Campus Alberta Symposium* where representatives from across the learning spectrum on **how to make a single, streamlined learning system open to all Albertans.**

hosted *Caring for Our Communities: Student Youth Justice Conference* for **more than 400 students** from Edmonton schools to discuss issues like bullying, alcohol and drug abuse, the *Young Offenders Act*, legal aid and school resource officers.

**allocated** a further \$120.3 million from the province's *New Century Schools Plan* (for a total of \$192.3 million to date in 2000-01) to provide **new Alberta schools** and maintain and modernize existing schools.

created a \$1 million **scholarship/bursary program for Alberta students** specializing in agricultural and agri-food studies that will be delivered by the *4-H Foundation of Alberta.*

**recruited** and trained 27 young people who will provide *Make Contact*, **peer facilitated youth development workshops**, throughout Alberta.

**launched** the *Alberta Ever Active Schools* program in 58 pilot schools around the province to **help schools promote regular physical activity.**

**hosted** *Connectivity 2000*, a series of **e-commerce workshops** designed to help local businesses compete in the global economy. Over 1,000 Albertans attended.

hosted a *Climate Change Education Symposium* for Alberta science teachers, as well as environmental education workshops for elementary and secondary pre-service science and social studies teachers.

presented **workshops** at several Alberta elementary and junior high schools on wildlife management, bear conflicts and *Report-a-Poacher* initiatives.

opened four new **Youth Connections Offices** in Jasper, Vegreville, Niton Junction and Vermilion (for a provincial total of 28) to help people aged 16 to 24 improve their employment prospects.

partnered with *Calgary Youth Employment Centre* and *Edmonton YMCA* to host two **workshops for organizations serving youth** about job development for young people with employment barriers.

developed a series of three **handbooks** to address the needs of employers, services providers and clients with disabilities.

# Building Stronger, Safer Communities

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Alberta's communities are diverse, vibrant, strong and safe. Albertans want to keep it that way so they work together with government and others for great results. For example, the *Fort Saskatchewan Citizens on Patrol Service* was recently named the *Best Civilian Crime Prevention Program Globally for a Community of 100,000 or less*. Pursuing the same standard of excellence during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, this government...



**provided** \$75 million in interest rebates to municipalities, school boards and post-secondary institutions through the *Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation*.

**improved** public safety with a new **phone system** for provincial adult correction centres **that prevents offenders from harassing victims**. A private supplier operates the system at no cost to taxpayers.

**established** two new *Youth Justice Committees* (for a provincial total of 85) in Calgary and northern Alberta. Committees work closely with local law enforcement to administer the alternative measures program.

**provided** \$400,000 to the *Alberta Fire Training School* to **assess provincial training needs** in light of Alberta's expanding heavy industry sector and growing population. The school will study industrial emergencies as well as municipal fire and emergency services.

**established** a mutually agreeable process for a **review of governance and finances of Metis Settlements** with the *Metis Settlements General Council*.

**provided** approximately 39,000 acres of land under **the Loon River First Nation treaty land entitlement claim** for official reserve status.

passed the *Holocaust Memorial and Genocide Remembrance Act* establishing November 14 as a day for Albertans to contemplate the suffering of Holocaust and genocide victims and the importance of human rights.

launched the *International Year of Volunteers* with the theme *A Year for Everyone*.

completed 45 workshops under the *Board Development Program* to help non-profit boards improve their governance practices.

participated in the City of Edmonton's carbon dioxide reduction initiative.

developed partnerships with municipalities and forest companies to develop action plans and work together in suppressing fires.

partnered with federal and municipal governments to provide up to \$513 million to Alberta municipalities over the next five years under the *Infrastructure Canada-Alberta Partnership Agreement*.

coordinated the annual *School Bus Safety Week* with communities across the province. This year's theme was *Great Escapes...What's Your Exit?*

launched *Know Your Consumer Rights*, an awareness initiative geared to Alberta's 300,000 seniors, highlighting the toll-free *Consumer Information Centre*.

introduced a guide for Albertans on **how to file a consumer complaint** and what to expect from an investigation process.

held the Alberta *Charities Roundtable 2000* to develop strategies to improve volunteer sector resources and performance and enable it to better serve Albertans and their communities.

conducted an environmental **scan of Aboriginal disability issues** to help develop strategies that will enable Aboriginal people with disabilities to better access employment and training programs that lead to self-sufficiency.

# Protecting Alberta's Natural and Cultural Heritage

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Albertans take pride in their beautiful, clean province, their uniquely western heritage and their vibrant cultural diversity. They want to preserve the environment as well as the cultural mosaic that covers the province from Fort McMurray to Cypress Hills. In support of these laudable goals, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, this government...

**established** objectives for water quality and quantity for a variety of water bodies to protect the aquatic environment and continued work with all water users planning for water management during water shortages.

**protected** an additional 510,000 hectares of Alberta land by **adding 21 new sites and expanding five others through the *Special Places* initiative**, including Birch Mountains, Marguerite River, Onefour, Dry Island Buffalo Jump, Tolman Badlands, Brazeau Canyon and Rock Lake-Salomon Creek.

**initiated** consultations on the implementation of the *Aboriginal Policy Framework*.

**established** an \$80 million program to remediate underground petroleum storage tank sites within municipalities. This site assessment and remediation program will run October 2000 to March 2002.

**received** recognition (as one of the top 100 events in North America) from the *American Bus Association for the Provincial Museum of Alberta's Millennium Series*, which included *Anno Domini: Jesus through the Centuries*, *Rise of the Black Dragon*, *Syria – Land of Civilizations* and *the Mystical Arts of Tibet*.

**updated** the code of practice for livestock operations to provide guidelines for greater environmental protection while reducing potential nuisance from dust, odor and noise. Copies available at [www.agric.gov.ab.ca](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca).

**opened** Canada's **first comprehensive aboriginal court** on the *Tsuu T'ina First Nation* reserve, blending aboriginal judicial traditions (like a peacemaker) with the *Provincial Court of Alberta*.



# Improving

## Efficiency and Innovation

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Alberta has many cutting-edge practices to thank for the excellent economic position it currently enjoys. Many were pioneered by Alberta business and industry. Others are the result of the Alberta Government at work, like the practice of providing third-party mediation to ensure that Alberta maintains one of the lowest number person-days lost to strikes in the country. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of the 2000-01 fiscal year, this government also...

**began** transition to a self-regulated dairy industry by appointing an interim chairperson to the *Alberta Dairy Control Board* while the industry moves to an independent, democratically elected structure.

**initiated** a review of the *Municipal 2000 Sponsorship program* to ensure it's able to continue providing small and medium sized municipalities with conditional grants for initiatives that promote innovation, cooperation and excellence in local government.

**opened** large trial courtroom for large and complex civil and criminal cases in the Edmonton Law Courts building. The court can accommodate 40 accused people, 40 defence attorneys and eight prosecutors.

**created** two new prosecution units in Edmonton and Calgary that will focus on resolving certain criminal matters before trial, freeing up court time for other cases. This follows a pilot project that saved 92 days of court time in less than seven months.

**opened** the *George W. Govier Centre for Flow and Sensor Technologies* to develop new technologies and processes that improve efficiency in energy production, manufacturing, petrochemical and other industrial sectors.

**created** the *Farming for the Future Research Funding Program* to focus research investments on new and emerging opportunities that help achieve the *Alberta Agriculture and Food Industry* vision for the future.

**introduced** the *Justice Statutes Amendment Act* to simplify and increase access to justice in Alberta. It also increases the monetary limit for civil cases that may be heard in *Provincial Court*.

**released** the *Information and Technology Management Strategy*, designed to help the government make better use of technology, improving its ability to provide services to Albertans.

# Strengthening the Alberta Economy

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Albertans currently enjoy a strong economy that is growing steadily (an estimated 6.1 per cent in 2000). There are many factors that affect growth over which no one has control like world commodity prices and the health of other economies such as the United States. But there are other variables like trade practices, debt load, financial policy and technological advancement that smart government and industry can effect to encourage growth. And the Alberta Government works diligently in conjunction with industry partners to foster growth in an economy that has become the envy of the world. To this end, during 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, the Alberta Government...

**announced major cuts** (totaling \$1 billion) to **provincial business taxes** (to be phased in over the next four years):

- small business tax rate cut in half from 6% to 3%
- small business threshold (the amount of income eligible for the small business rate) doubled from \$200,000 to \$400,000
- general tax rate reduced by 7.5 percentage points to 8%
- manufacturing and processing tax rate reduced by 6.5% percentage points to 8%.

**cut property taxes** for 2001 by \$135 million.

**announced the elimination of provincial capital tax** on financial institutions, effective April 1, 2001.

**delivered** the first of two \$150 cheques to 2.2 million Albertans under Alberta's Energy Tax Refund program. The \$690 million program is designed to help relieve the pressures of higher than normal home heating costs, gasoline and other energy costs between September and March.

**lowered the provincial debt** by making a \$300 million U.S. debt payment as part of the government's plan to eliminate its remaining accumulated debt. The money is part of the \$4.5 billion debt payment package unveiled in the *1st Quarter Fiscal Update* in August, bringing interest savings to \$1 billion since 1994-95.

**continued** to deregulate the electricity industry by:

- working with its partners to implement three key elements of a 10 point Action Plan to address electricity supply and demand issues.
- conducting a second series of electricity auctions resulting in the sale of more than 2700 Mw to 45 different parties and generating net proceeds of over \$1 billion that will be returned to consumers through rebates.
- registering 21 retailers to provide electricity services in Alberta.

- announcing residential industrial and commercial rebates, to foster the competitiveness. Half a billion dollars went to residential consumers and \$1.5 billion went to non-residential consumers.

commissioned a **study of non-tariff** trade barriers to identify obstacles faced by Alberta exporters.

pressed for **elimination of trade barriers** at meetings with European trade leaders, western U.S. state governments, and at a major agricultural trade reform conference.

created an *Alberta/Ukraine Advisory Council* to help establish closer relations with Ukraine.

led **delegations** to California, Asia and Australia (with Alberta business and education representatives) **promoting Alberta as a great place** to work, invest or establish an information and communications technology business.

participated in the *6<sup>th</sup> Convention on Climate Change* in the Netherlands, to ensure federal negotiators were aware of provincial priorities and international decisions would not adversely affect Alberta's economy.

continued **agriculture trade talks in Idaho**, addressing the *Potato Growers of Idaho* at their annual meeting.

began forging ties with Chile by **providing the country with consulting services** to develop crop insurance programs and possibly other farm safety net measures.

hosted *Alberta Days*, a series of **investment and trade sessions at Expo 2000** in Hannover, Germany. More than 600 German and other European decision-makers attended.



**signed** an **economic cooperation agreement** with the Argentine province of Neuquén to work together developing business opportunities and trade expansion.

**completed** a three-year **review of the Labour Market Development Agreement** and, as a result, began work regarding taxation issues relating to Employment Insurance support for people in provincial training programs.

**partnered** with the Alberta construction industry and the federal government on *Trade Up! Careers in Construction*, an interactive CD-ROM and web site for youth that **promotes careers in the construction industry**.

**released** a television and video series (in partnership with other provinces and the federal government) to **raise the awareness of non-traditional careers for young women**. Also partnered with the Edmonton Girls Hockey Association to host a *Women in Sports* career hockey tournament for young women.

**awarded** two **five-year highway maintenance contracts** (for a total of more than \$200 million) in southern Alberta, which will result in savings of about 35% a kilometre, compared to the initial round of tendering in 1996.

**introduced** a laminated veneer lumber dues system that recognizes the lumber as a **new commodity** and reflects the market based stumpage regime in Alberta.



provided \$233 million in **one-time support to Alberta's farmers** to help offset another difficult year of extreme weather, low commodity prices, growing input costs and the relative lack of federal government support.

developed *A Strategic Vision and Direction for Alberta's Forest Sector* in consultation with industry stakeholders, charting a **course for increased economic contributions and sound benefits** to Albertans to 2010.

provided financial support to agribusiness (through the *Agriculture Financial Services Corporation*) facilitating financing of \$23 million for 17 agribusiness projects; authorizing \$34 million in loans to farmers and paying \$150 million for 1998 and \$70 million (so far) for 1999 crop insurance claims.

introduced *Alberta SUPERNET* – a **high-speed broadband network**, connecting 420 communities in the province within three years.

created the *ICT Implementation Committee* to foster **wireless industry development** including e-commerce, e-learning, e-government and e-health.

provided \$170,000 in first-year funding – with a matching grant from the federal government – to **support pre-commercial research projects in microsystems**, specifically on the convergence of microelectronics, information technology and life sciences.

signed a joint technology development agreement with the Institute of Materials Research and Engineering in Singapore to develop a catalytic membrane reactor, which has tremendous potential across many markets.



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